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STRATEGIC IDIOCY AND MORAL PRINCIPLE

by George Morgenstern

Deep concern afflicted our global salvationists when early reports from Korea told of a succession of American reverses. The missionary undertaking (with hardware and explosives) was not being well received by those we were intent on saving. Almost at once the crusaders on the home front fell prey to doubts lest Soviet ideology possess a superior attraction.

We were solemnly informed that Russia had succeeded in investing the North Korean Communists with a fighting faith and will. Misguided they might be, but there it was. What to do? Senator Benton came forward, to great applause from the internationalist gallery, with the suggestion that we embark upon "a Marshall Plan of ideas". We should export righteousness by radio and persuade the lesser breeds that our moral principles and material assistance were a better bargain in the long run than anything Russia had to offer.

General Eisenhower, nicely accommodating the military and academic, called for an ideological general staff. Secretary of State Acheson minted a phrase by referring to the "struggle for men's minds and allegiances". General Marshall, Bernard Baruch, General Walter Bedell Smith, General David Sarnoff, and other leading thinkers nodded in asseveration that only a "propaganda of truth" would serve.

Strangely missing from this seminar was the pragmatic professor from Harvard, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who might have reduced the discussion to its lowest common denominator by applying to Asiatics the counsel he recently tendered Republicans: "The dictate of true conservatism would be to bribe the masses, if you will, by assuring them the basic decencies of living."

II

Now the obvious thing about Russia is that its military and political expansion is based upon interior lines of communication. We do not need Professor Owen Lattimore to remind us that Bolshevism's primary attractive force is exercised upon its closest neighbors. When it has engorged a fresh satellite, it has a new frontier presenting one or more additional prospects for conversion to Communism by means of the techniques of infiltration and pressure at which Stalin is so skilled.

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"People's republics" are not found thousands of miles away from the U.S.S.R. in such places as Nigeria, the Andaman Islands, or Patagonia. They are found in proximity to Russia. There are, of course, Communists in all countries, and armed Communists in some, but none has succeeded to the extent of becoming the governing force in any land that is not contiguous to the area in which Stalin has consolidated his power.

Among the comparative primitives of Asia, it is possible Communism possesses a superior attraction, even though it may be doubted that one Korean Marxist in 10,000 has read a line of the Marxian scriptures. But, at any rate, Stalinism is the handiest ideology and, in redivision of the land and a full rice bowl, may offer more immediately, than Senator Benton can cram into a Voice of America commercial.

This matter of interior lines may engage the attention of the American military, but it obviously plays no part in the calculations of our politicians and salvationists. Distance has never impeded such people when a job of world saving was to be done. It was once fashionable among them to say that the Atlantic was a ditch which Hitler would vault in a trice. He never did, but the fact is indisputable that twice the influence of the salvationists was sufficient to dispatch an American expeditionary force across the ocean in the reverse direction.

These, of course, were moral crusades, as the speeches of Wilson and Roosevelt attest. A crusade need not be an action taken in the national interest, and, judging from the results of those undertaken by Western Europe in the Middle Ages and by the United States in the Twentieth Century, they rarely are. All of these adventures called the participants a long way from home, with results not fortunate.

The Korean imbroglio was immediately invested with the same moral content. It involved distances and logistical problems which might easily have given pause to persons making it a habit to stop and think -- not characteristically an American habit. From San Francisco to Seoul is some 5,700 miles. This is 1,700 miles farther than from New York to the Iron Curtain on the Oder, and 1,300 miles more distant than from Times Square to the European frontier of the U.S.S.R. itself.

It was evident that the line of communication from the continental United States was long and tenuous, and, even if General MacArthur happened by a fortunate chance to be nearby in Japan, his resources were limited in comparison to Stalin's abundance of Asiatic cannon fodder, easily armed with surplus production from Soviet arsenals.

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Nevertheless, Mr. Truman, the salvationists, and, a trifle late, the United Nations discovered a familiar moral imperative, and Americans awakened to find their sons involved in "a police action" against "a bunch of bandits".

III

The President assigned American forces to this exacting task in the same happy-go-lucky spirit in which the AEF had been sent abroad, the marines dispatched to Guadalcanal, and the American Army introduced to the North African landscape and made acquainted with the beaches of Normandy. Strategic considerations were dismissed as casually as when Ambassador Winant agreed to the boundaries of the zones of occupation in Germany and the sectors of occupation in Berlin, denying us, in the one, the use of a seaport for reinforcement or retreat, and allowing us no guaranteed access of any sort to the other.

At the same time that Mr. Truman committed himself to the mission of "liberating" the unprofitable Republic of South Korea, he was restrained -- this being a moral crusade -- from effecting any constructive result, always assuming that we should win. The United Nations let it be known that we might drive the invader back over the 38th parallel, but that we ourselves should be in the position of an aggressor if we engaged in further pursuit. For some days, as a consequence, Mr. Truman hesitated to allow air strikes over the parallel into Communist country, but he finally was impelled to do so.

Even assuming a victory south of the parallel, we shall be exactly where we were before, with the Communists tenaciously installed in their former holdings, with a ravaged country on our hands, a discredited Korean government, and a Korean army impotent to fight its own battles. We shall have expended some thousands of lives, some hundreds of millions of dollars, at the least, and a great deal of war material will have been shot away, lost, or irreparably damaged. We shall have to place South Korea on a permanent dole and garrison the country as long as we expect it to remain out of Communist hands.

Meanwhile, Stalin will have inflicted great damage upon us at no cost to himself. The trick that worked once can be worked again. He was very cautious in World War II to heed the admonition of the German military philosophers which Hitler ignored and to confine himself to one war at a time on one front. But, by Communist revolutions and armed forays on the Soviet periphery, singly or in groups, he can commit us, if he chooses, to wars on a dozen fronts in succession or at once. And, while we are engaged, we shall not even scratch at the real adversary.

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Now, out of all this it should be possible to distill some rational precept for future national guidance -- irrationality (usually referred to as "experience") being judged the best teacher. It should be apparent that only three courses are open to us: (1) A policy of withdrawal, invariably termed "isolationism" by global salvationists; (2) the kind of policy we are now pursuing -- intervention with a high moral content (by our own definition), but with little or no prospective accrual to the national interest; or (3) a policy patterned upon that of Russia itself, requiring that we convert ourselves into a military empire frankly bent upon world power, aggrandizement, and exploitation of everyone else, Russians included.

A practical statesman, seeing little possibility of the acceptance of Policy No. 1 ("Isolationism") in view of the successful saturation techniques of salvationist propaganda, and fearing the consequences of Policy No. 2 (Salvationism Without Profit), would probably incline toward Policy No. 3 (American Military Empire).

It is only fair to warn, however, that this policy entails manifest sacrifices and some risks. Our Constitution, our liberties, and our representative Republic would have to go, as the successful Russian example shows that a going military empire thrives best when all power is centered in the hands of a restricted, hard bitten, elite leadership. We do not seem to be well equipped, at the moment, with candidates for dictator, or, for that matter, with any leadership at all.

In the struggle (with propaganda and hardware) for men's minds, we shall probably be advised to employ such slogans and techniques as have proved particularly successful, in the estimation of Senator Benton and other experts, when invoked by the Soviets. Our conquering armies will thus go forward to the persuasive slogan of "Land, Bread, Peace", carrying with them portraits, suitable for framing, of Roosevelt and Truman or whoever Big Brother happens to be.

After our triumph, we will enrich ourselves with the treasures and resources of the earth, and, in our slave labor camps, convert the liberated billions to the joys of virtuous toil in our service. The millenium will be here, and, in time, we daresay, the State will wither away and New Deal wars and taxation will be an almost forgotten memory.

George Morgenstern is the author of Pearl Harbor -- The Story of the Secret War (Devin-Adair, 1947).

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VII, No. 29

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By Frank C. Hanighen July 19, 1950

AROUND THE TOWN: "No wonder Eisenhower is in town", said a Washington get-about. "And with two offices here. Never mind where. He's hard to find. They say he's, well, advising the President. About the Republicans to be taken into the cabinet? Could be. I know he has two candidates for jobs like that -- Stassen and Dulles. That would take care of the wonder boy from Minnesota, so far as Ike's plans go. Meanwhile, in Washington, Ike is getting a lot of information and advice -- but not the same advice he gets from Russell Davenport."

---- Our dim view of GOP prospects in the November elections (which we stated before the Korean business came along) should be amended. Now there looms a parallel between 1950 and 1942, that memorable off-year election when the GOP nearly won the House. In 1942, there were also military defeats, and the North African invasion came too late to affect the voters. Also people hadn't adjusted themselves to the new wartime controls.

At any rate, observers rate GOP chances much higher in the past week. For instance, Admiral Denfeld when he first announced candidacy for Massachusetts Governorship wasn't given a chance; now the talk is that he may well win because of disgruntlement over Administration conduct of the war. Furthermore, letters which the Democratic National Committee receives from local leaders are not very complimentary about Truman. Finally, another nightmare haunts the White House: a meat shortage which might duplicate the fatal one during the campaign of '46. The Administration fears that the farmers, expecting rising prices, will keep cattle off the market.

---- There is such fulsome praise showered on Ambassador Loy Henderson for his handling of Premier Nehru during the first days of the Korean crisis that diplomatic correspondents are set a-wondering. Henderson was the whipping boy for the Zionists a few years ago and was shelved to India. Now State Department officials who didn't like him then, are rather studiously tossing laurels in his direction. It is asked -- is it possible that Henderson may be recalled to take a high post in the Department? If that should happen, the Department would regain some of its lost prestige in Washington, especially on Capitol Hill. For hereabouts Henderson has been known as a vigorous and consistent critic of Soviet Russia, and for 20 years, too. He's no Johnny-come-lately.

---- Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson is being made the goat in the Capital for the defeats in Korea. Congress and most of the local press have fallen for the line propagated by friends of Acheson, who wanted to take the heat off their man and transfer it to Johnson. But reports we receive from out in the country indicate that folks out there still center their criticism on Acheson, "the friend of Hiss"; and many of the grass-roots residents do not even know the name of the Secretary of Defense. As for the justice of the criticism of Johnson on the score that he practiced economy at the expense of military readiness, that was the White House line -- to skimp the Pentagon and spend on welfare.

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"MILITARY CIRCLES SAY": The only "circle" of Mars that we have found to speak with authority and assurance tells us that the handling of the Army in Korea has been much better than popularly supposed. It has been "pretty good", considering logistics and lack of men and arms. A few battalions were sent in in advance to slow up a number of divisions of the enemy, and the planned disengaging movement was well

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carried out -- and gets better. As the enemy lines of communication lengthen and suffer from air attacks, and as more U.S. troops arrive, quite a different and happier picture will appear; is already appearing.

The same "circle" (for once, we have it in the singular) believes that total mobilization should not take place now -- that would mean all-out war and would be regarded as such by Russia. "You can't bluff Russia with that." But six divisions, at most, of the National Guard should be mobilized; that's about all we can train and equip, under present circumstances, in coming months. As for the divisions of regulars, they should be brought up to strength immediately. We should emphasize (in view of our delightful state of service "disunification") that the above opinions are from neither Air Corps nor Navy "circles".

General MacArthur is obviously stripping his forces in Japan to the very bone. Observers here interpret this fact as significant of the friendly attitude of the Japanese -- and a tribute to the wisdom of the General's Occupation policy.

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GERMAN REARMAMENT: Just before the Korean invasion, an informal conference was held in Paris between certain high former officers of the Reichswehr and members of the French General Staff. The Germans were received with more than cordiality. We have ascertained no precise details of the proceedings, but authoritative sources in Europe inform us that the meeting dealt with plans for rearming Germany. Afterward, some of those present said that "big decisions may be on the way". It has been the opinion of some experts in Washington that if the French Government were to approve proposals for a German armed force, the path would be smoother for American military advocates of such a course. The Conference broke up hopefully, but we have no intelligence of this rearmament situation since the fighting in Korea broke out.

Significant of the changed atmosphere in the past few weeks was the appearance, three days ago in the Washington Post, of a feature article favorable to the creation of a German military "defensive" force. It was considered surprising that the Post, which has -- to say the least -- a strong Fair Dealish policy, should give prominence to this article. The details given (in the piece) include many "precautions" which apparently Western Allied authorities consider necessary; such as, Allied inspectors for the German troops, limitation to a certain strength, status as merely a "border force", etc. There is no doubt that such a plan, if offered two years ago, would have been received by the Germans without qualification.

But, times have changed. We must report that the spokesmen of the Reichswehr -- and for all we know, of the West German Government too -- now lay down conditions: (1) such a force should enjoy privileges, equal to those of other armies, in a Western European defense force; (2) the 1937 boundaries of Germany must eventually be restored; (3) that the "Nuremberg treatment" of high German officers must be stopped, and personalities in the Landsberg prison be released; (4) that the Western Allies must supply arms and pay for the upkeep of the German army, unless the West German Government is relieved of costs of the Occupation; (5) that the integrity of West German territory be guaranteed (while building up the force) against aggression from the East. These are the terms. In explanation of them, former Reichswehr personalities say that at present Germans fear so intensely occupation by the Russians that they want safeguards; and that the stipulation as to Nuremberg sentences is necessary because the populace has come to hold the old officers (who would have to staff such an army) in low esteem because of the trials.

Now, these terms may well prove too stiff for the political taste of Washington, if not of Paris, and observers here who have knowledge of them wonder whether an agreement can be reached "in time". Indeed, those who study the European military situation are keenly conscious of the accelerated pace of the world crisis and incline to the opinion that it is too late for any rearming of Germany.

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A cynical friend makes the following observation: "Maybe one reason why we're going to hear a great deal about the necessity of German rearmament is just that -- it's too late."

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REPUBLICAN CAVE-IN: (Edna Lonigan reports from Capitol Hill.) The Republicans were offered not merely an opportunity, but a duty, in the Korean blunder. But they have not had the courage to seize it. The first day after the invasion Jenner and Malone led the call for a repudiation of the men and the policies who had got us into this dangerous spot. Jenner said, "We can no longer entrust our future to those who have betrayed the past."

But timid counsels set in -- such as, "the public might interpret strong denunciation as playing politics in war time"; "the Republicans ought not to try to get into power now, but wait for 1952"; and so on. Dewey said we must be prepared for "sacrifice", a favorite New Deal name for the war economy. Even former Governor Landon of Kansas went along. Senator Knowland, who knows well how devious and dangerous our China policy has been, proposed that the President should take two Republicans into his cabinet. Saddest of all, is the spectacle of Republican Senators conferring with the captive of the State Department, John Foster Dulles, asking him what we should do in Korea.

Taft has refused to join the chorus in favor of economic controls, and says Congress will sign no blank checks in economic policy. But in foreign policy the opposition has been outgeneralled.

The political task of the opposition is not to argue about details, but to challenge the major premises of the party in power, to propose a total change in direction, if the nation is being led to disaster. The party in power has a vested interest in covering its mistakes. Only a strong opposition can force abandonment of dangerous policies. The Acheson clique has a policy. As Malone said, it is to extend the controls of our economy, and make one economic world, in which our standard of living will be leveled down to the world average. These men cannot oppose Communism because they agree with its fundamental economic philosophy. They are entangling us in a UN which has been fashioned by them, to serve their purposes, and to make permanent the hold of the planners on the resources of our country.

The opposition owes it to the young men dead in Korea to demand removal of the men of Yalta, to put an end to the dissipation of our resources and to remake UN as an organization of limited powers, not an absolute government in which the planners are unrestrained by law. If the Republicans cannot make that task into an opposition, where will the people turn for leadership?

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OUR PRICELESS PROCONSULS: Miss Lonigan reports that several instances have come up recently of a new species of American, the Government agent who is telling other sovereign nations what to do. Sometimes they are innocents abroad, without either the culture or the simple common sense which would make our advice barely tolerable if really necessary. Sometimes these spokesmen for the American people conform to a more sinister type.

Carl W. McArdle of the Philadelphia Bulletin tells of the American "economic advisers" who a few weeks ago lectured Syngman Rhee on his "Alice-in-Wonderland economy" where the budget was not balanced! He, poor man, was obsessed with the idea that the Communists were going to invade his country, and he must spend money for defense. "High powered visitors from the State Department in Washington had lectured him on all this and threatened the end of American aid", reported McArdle. [Italics ours.] We also beheld the comic spectacle of Washington employees telling the Greek nation it must balance its budget -- while we unbalance ours to pay their travelling expenses!

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Even more serious is the story from the veteran newspaperman, Richard Stokes, in Tidings (Los Angeles, California). On June 2 he wrote, "American correspondents [in Formosa] were horrified to discover that the American Embassy in Taipeh is engaged in mercilessly driving the final nail in the coffin" of Chiang Kai-shek. "In the opinion of his compatriots on Formosa, Strong [the Chargé d'Affaires] is a rabid Stillwellite -- that is, a devoted adherent to the party line as redrawn for China by Joseph Stalin in 1943." The Chargé, Robert Campbell Strong, "constantly urged upon Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek that the Formosa Government would never be recognized by Secretary Acheson as a true democracy until Communists were accepted in the regime." The Embassy is trying to promote dissension between Chiang and his brilliant commander in chief of ground forces, a graduate of VMI, and former head of the Chinese armies in Burma.

The Chargé's air of sophistication and his evasiveness led the spokesman for the newspapermen to suggest that the reporters walk out of the room. More than half the reporters boycotted the Embassy reception which was given just before they left for the purpose of undermining any favorable impressions they may have gathered.

The spiritual climate of Formosa, said the writer, is "patriotic, idealistic, and intensely pro-American", but the United States Embassy is like "alien and enemy soil . . . not only anti-Chinese, but anti-American and pro-Soviet".

How many "little men of Yalta" has our State Department sent to areas all over the world? The American people do not know -- but the other nations do!

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THE SOVIET OCTOPUS: Very little attention, comments Miss Lonigan, has been paid in this country to the vital question of how the U.S.S.R. planned to exploit its conquest of China. Alfred Kohlberg of the American China Policy Association has just made public a smuggled translation of a secret agreement between the U.S.S.R. and Chou En Lai in Moscow in February, 1950. It is obviously not possible to get "proof" of the accuracy of such documents in war time. The plan for subordination of the Chinese nation follows very closely, however, the plan worked out by the Soviet leaders for the enslavement of their own country after 1927: a large army and bureaucracy for the careerists; conscription of labor for the potentially dangerous; and liquidation as the ultimate disciplinary threat. The Nazis adopted a similar pattern in Poland. It is the modern form of tribute from a conquered country.

In China, alone, the U.S.S.R. will gain a slave labor army of ten million, managed by Russians, to produce the simpler materials, while the Russians move into the most skilled occupations. Its fighting forces will be increased by four million, Soviet advisers will manage all government departments and all industrial enterprises. A Soviet army will be stationed in China, and Soviet colonies will fill the gap left by the liquidation of 100 million Chinese farmers, officials, teachers, and religious leaders. It is time, as Hanson Baldwin said recently, to revise our notion of the satellites.

Chiang Kai-shek thinks his people want to be liberated from such a fate. If our Government were not laced with pro-Communists, Americans could express their natural horror at this utter debasement of human life, and offer to Asia hope of eventual freedom. Instead, we are being quietly maneuvered by the Acheson clique to subordinate our armed forces, our laws and our governmental machinery to a UN in which the Chinese Communists may soon sit on the Security Council.

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CORRECTION: HUMAN EVENTS wishes to apologize to the Filipinos and to General Fellers for the typographical error which appeared in section IV of his article last week. In 1941, the Philippines purchased $81 million worth of American goods, not $1 million worth as incorrectly printed.

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European Supplement *to* Human Events Vol. VII, No. 29

By Bertrand de Jouvenel PARIS -- July, 1950

IMPACT OF THE KOREAN WAR: The U.S. has astonished Europe twice in this month; by the readiness of its will and the unreadiness of its means.

President Truman's announcement burst as a fanfare upon Europeans dispirited by the dispatches of their informants in the States. These were unanimous in foretelling inaction, which did not seem improbable to the Europeans: the unchecked progress of the aggressor's columns, the moral condemnation by international councils -- all this evoked the Thirties and it was readily believed that the similitude would be rounded out by the same old military inaction. In these two days a curious contrast was noticeable between France's experienced politicians who spoke of a democracy's difficulty in implementing its diplomatic promises and on the other hand France's chief diplomats who never doubted American determination.

As a consequence of the Truman thunderclap, opinion at large expected the folding up of the Red offensive. The danger seemed to lie in Soviet intervention: but short of that it seemed obvious to the public that the local war was done away with by the mere appearance of American forces. That these should have had to go into really serious action and that they should suffer reverses are developments quite unexpected by European opinion.

It seems that all of us Western Liberals think far too much in terms of potentialities; not enough in terms of actualities. In the League of Nations structure the expectation was that moral condemnation of the aggressor would shame him into retreat, by a combination of moral pressure and vague threat. When collective security was built upon the League fabric, and the concept of common military action mooted from 1922 to 1924, nobody thought that the combined forces would have to go into action: their mere putting into motion, it was felt, would frighten away the transgressor. The picture in our minds was always that of the wicked retreating in disorder before the banners of the crusaders. It was a case of action at a distance, and no image of pushing the aggressor back by weight of immediate impact was present in our conscience.

Now it is possible that this image of action without contact was justified at the outset, when the world scene comprised a plurality of first-class Powers, accepting common standards. Anyone or any pair of the 1914 Powers would have been discouraged from aggression by the moral condemnation of the other Powers and the threat of their superior force, if it was merely said that this force would be brought into play.

But the international scene has been transformed disastrously in three respects. First, the loss of common moral standards: to Red North Koreans, the moral condemnation of Western Democrats means nothing. Second, the reduction in the number of first class Powers: as the world has fallen into two camps, the Koreans or the Russians have nothing to fear from an overpowering combination of Powers. Third, there has grown up a barbaric disbelief in mere words and even in mere sight: where a civilized statesman or general will retire before the prospect or appearance of superior force, the barbarian retires only under the physical pressure of superior force actually applied. Not surprisingly, this is the most frightening aspect of the present situation.

It was the hope of the West that the potential strength of the U.S. would warn off aggression from the countries to which a check has been given, good for military

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support, cashable at the Pentagon. This was not an unreasonable hope but it turns out to have been unjustified. If the checks are to be presented for payment, then America must have the military liquidities necessary to face these commitments. The potential strength must be actualized, and it has to be applied physically. This is an extremely wasteful process forced upon the West.

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EFFECT OF U.S. MILITARY REVERSES: American military reverses in Korea exert a favorable influence upon European opinion. That the aggression came from the South under American inspiration was the Soviet and Communist assertion: in France it was believed by a number of people. It is not to be forgotten that the Communists are the exclusive purveyors of news to about one half of the wage-earning population. The speed of Red advance and evidence of American improvisation have not only refuted a falsehood but refuted it so rapidly that the impression of having been lied to is very vivid in the masses. In this intermediate and influential layer of opinion which is at the same time anti-Russian and anti-American, adversity in Korea has also produced a favorable impression. In such circles the inhuman efficiency of the Americans is held against them and, worst of all, the formidable efficiency of their war machines: the fact that things were bungled, and that troops broke, dispels the robotic aspect which journalism had given to American strength. Candid reports from the front, describing disorderly retreat as we have known it, bring the American combatants very near to French hearts. They can also be thought of as "les petits soldats", a term of affection previously reserved to our own and which conveys a world of things: that soldiers are somewhat fragile young men not transfigured by uniform into archangels of war.

While American adversity is decidedly good propaganda (the use of the atom bomb would have a most deplorable effect), it also teaches the Europeans a practical lesson. It is clear to them that intervention is meeting with misfortune because too few troops were hurled into the breach too soon. This, of course, is a consequence of the almost immediate breakdown of local resistance, which should have held a front behind which American troops could be stored up until they were ready to hit out in adequate numbers. The lesson to be drawn is of importance not only to Americans but mainly to Europeans. If it is a great military imprudence to rush troops into battle as they land, in the hope of stopping the enemy somewhere and somehow; if intervention can be effective and should from the military angle be undertaken only under cover of local forces; it follows for the Europeans that they must set up forces adequate to hold back a Russian thrust for as long as it will take the Americans to bring over adequate forces. And adequate forces for the Western front cannot be ferried over in less than a year. Consequently Western Europe has to fight its own battle, expecting help from strategic bombing within something like ten days, a small number of divisions within two months, but a real army not before as much as a year.

The problem of European rearmament thus becomes Europe's main concern. This is sensed by the public. The avalanche of Red columns and American impotence to stem them has suggested to almost everyone the transposition of this same course of events in Europe, and opinion would have responded whole-heartedly to a call for rearmament. This has not come. No politician of any stature, either in England or in France, has stated the urgent priority of defense over all other political objects. Mr. Churchill himself made a feeble speech in the debate on Korea.

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HAVE THE RUSSIANS ABANDONED THE HOPE OF CAPITALIST COLLAPSE? Of course the Korean war, with the military effort it forces upon the U.S. and the armament effort it calls for in Europe, leads us straight back into inflationary conditions. We must

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expect everywhere deficit financing of military expenditures, consequent excess of incomes over marketable goods: we are now thoroughly grounded in such developments. Some people think that Soviet Russia's policy consists in wearing down the West with the burden of military expenditures and the attendant process of price raises and depreciation of currency. Such an opinion is unduly optimistic. The Russian vision of capitalist collapse is well known and entirely different. Capitalist collapse is to come as a consequence of too little buying power in the hands of the masses, insufficient demand, and under-employment. It is a great depression with millions of unemployed, not an inflationary boom, that the Communists regard as the means to a more or less pacific overthrow of capitalism.

It is worthy of notice and not a little disturbing, that Soviet actions should now be driving us into the paths of inflationary rearmament and attendant full or over-full employment. That is, they are driving us away from this under-employment position which they regard as a prelude to capitalist collapse. According to their views, they are rescuing us from our mortal malady, and thus defeating their strategy of peace: a thing they would hardly do had they not abandoned the hope of destroying capitalism in peace and turned over to a strategy of war.

In this respect it is not impossible that the Varga controversy marked a turning point. This economist doubted that fluctuations in the capitalist world were to grow worse and worse as Marxist catastrophism asserted, and he suggested that depressions might quite well be damped down. "If the nasty old man is still hale and strong, indeed thriving, shall we wait for his natural death?" This question may well have taken shape in Kremlin minds. A true Marxist is apt to observe the prudence of the vulture. But are the leaders of the Kremlin still true Marxists and may they not have switched to the attitude of the eagle who pounces upon live and healthy preys?

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FRANCE EAGER FOR DEFENSE: The intentions of the Kremlin leaders are completely unknown to us but not the enormity of their forces. French information is that they dispose of 175 divisions out of which 60 to 70 are equipped for the offensive, and something like 40 per cent of the total might any day they chose roll down on Western Europe, which, as I have often underlined here, is completely defenseless. It need not so remain. Indeed the will to defense has notably made its appearance in this country, though the politicians have no time to notice it. The drive upon Korea with its rumbling of tanks has stirred memories and aroused a fighting spirit. What is lacking is only leadership. The leading circles of the political and newspaper world display a flabbiness which is quite unrepresentative. It is curious that a personnel which has been completely renovated only six years ago should be as it were nodding with age, and incapable of any dynamic initiative.

The attitude of Communists is a point of interest. Recent elections to social security councils show that something like 45 per cent of wage and salary earners going to the polls voted for Communists: an impressive figure. It should be interpreted. The fact is that workers regard Communists as their best advocates in matters of labor policy. It does not follow that they would obey Communist orders when these would seem treasonable. It is to be remembered that the Communist Party fell to almost nothing in France when it turned defeatist as a consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentropp alliance. It is worthy of mention that actual moves to destroy war material, of which there have been a few, were not executed by Communist workers but by special commandos of the Communist Party. There is every reason to think that the French would be far more unanimous and eager than anyone believes, if it came to defending the soil, provided they do not remain unarmed and unorganized.

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Book Events

Prejudice and the Press, by Frank Hughes. New York: The Devin-Adair Company. $6.00. Reviewed by Frank Chodorov.

One day in April, 1947, there fell upon America a document called A Free and Responsible Press. It was propelled into our life by a "Commission of Freedom of the Press", which, we were told, consisted of a baker's dozen of "eminent" professors with a grant of $200,000 from Time, Inc., and Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. The document was announced, praised, denounced, forgotten. Now comes a book of over 600 pages in which the author, a newspaper man of experience and more than a little understanding of propaganda methods, tells us about the professors and how they came to their conclusions.

The book is a damaging indictment. It shows that the findings were pre-determined by the prejudices of the "eminent" ones, that their investigations were far from objective. For evidence, the author adduces the known Communistic affiliations of some of the pedagogs and the collectivist inclinations of others as expressed in their writings; his most damaging evidence, however, are the philosophic postulates incorporated in their report. The sum total of these postulates is that while the commissioners do believe in the freedom of the press, nevertheless, "without intruding on press activities, government may act to improve the conditions under which they take place so that the public interest is better served". Pure semanticism, of course. One of the recommendations of the commission for safeguarding "freedom of the press" is for the government, "through the medium of mass communication, to inform the public of the facts with respect to its policies" -- in short, for the government to go into the newspaper business.

The author digs deeply into the report's double talk. He hardly needed to. The general direction of this so-called investigation is revealed in the following: "The notion of rights . . . conferred by the Creator at birth, was a marvelous fighting principle against arbitrary governments. . . . But in the context of achieved political freedom the need of limitation becomes evident. The unworkable and invalid conception of birthrights . . . makes a mockery of every free institution." There you have it. The denial of natural rights, obviously mystic and unprovable, leads directly to the other equally mystic and unprovable concept of rights by the collectivity, operating through political power. It is one or the other. You accept, on face value, either the sanctity of the individual or the sanctity of the State. The "investigating" commission chose the latter; perhaps they could not do otherwise. Individualism is one of the things that "simply are not done" in ivy circles.

The report is called A Free and Responsible Press. Responsible to whom? To the fellow who buys the papers? Oh, no. Responsible to the "common good" -- which, in practice, becomes responsible to the bureaucracy. To soften the shock of its own dictum, the commission insists that "government must set limits on its capacity to interfere with, regulate or suppress the voices of the press or to manipulate the data on which public judgment is formed". That is, the good government must set limits on its regulatory powers!

Mr. Hughes' book is more than an exposé of a patently prejudiced commission. It is an intelligent commentary on the statist trend of thought prevailing in the schools of higher learning and the inherent threat to all freedom, not only of the press, from that source. The danger is emphasized, the book shows, by the large tremendous funds placed at the disposal of these statist professors by tax-free foundations. The pinko-side has lots of money to do with. Individualism, quite properly, depends on the courage and initiative of a private publisher.

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